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STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCES DISTRIBUTION PLANS FOR POTASSIUM IODIDE NEAR VIRGINIA NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

(Richmond, Va.)— State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H., today announced plans for the distribution of potassium iodide for citizens living within 10 miles of Virginia's two nuclear power plants in Surry and Louisa Counties.

"Potassium iodide is not a substitute for emergency procedures, such as evacuation and in-place sheltering during a nuclear emergency," Dr. Stroube said. "However, it is one more protective measure we can provide to help safeguard Virginia citizens if an emergency occurs at a nuclear power plant."

The state's plan calls for one dose of potassium iodide to be made available prior to an emergency to each person who lives or works within 10 miles of the two nuclear power plants. The other half of the state's stock of potassium iodide will be stored and is now available for immediate distribution in the event of a nuclear accident.

Local Health Departments will notify people in their communities within the next few weeks when and where they can voluntarily receive their free dose of potassium iodide. Proof of identification and residence will be necessary. *(A listing of scheduled clinics is attached and will be updated on our Web site.)*

Potassium iodide is a non-prescription medication that if taken in an appropriate and timely dosage, can block exposure to radioactive iodine, one of the contaminants that could be released in a nuclear accident or similar event. Exposure to radioactive iodine can increase the risk of thyroid cancer.

"Potassium iodide is most effective if taken within a few hours before, during, or immediately after exposure," Dr. Stroube said. "The medication can help prevent thyroid cancer, especially in children. Children are more likely to develop thyroid cancer following exposure to radioactive iodine."

Citizens are instructed to store the medication where it can be easily accessed should an emergency occur. People should not take potassium iodide unless the State Health Commissioner instructs them to do so during an emergency.

People allergic to iodine should avoid taking potassium iodide. People with certain thyroid diseases, such as Grave's disease, thyroiditis, and goiter, and people with known skin diseases (dermatitis herpetiformis or hypocomplementemic vasculitis) should consult with their physicians before taking potassium iodide.

Virginia has received 660,000 doses of potassium iodide from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The NRC provided potassium iodide to Virginia specifically for an estimated 330,000 citizens who live, work or visit within 10 miles of the Surry Nuclear Power Station located in Surry County and the North Anna Nuclear Power Station located in Louisa County.

Potassium iodide also is available to the public for purchase without a prescription through Anbex, Inc. Anbex can be contacted at (866) 463-6754 or through their Web site at www.anbex.com.

For more information on potassium iodide, log onto the Virginia Department of Health's Web site at www.vdh.state.va.us.